



Home > Articles > Insights into hours worked, October 2020

Insights into hours worked, October 2020

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 **Source:** [Labour Force, Australia, October 2020](#)

On this page

[Hours worked and employment](#)

[Hours worked ranges](#)

[Flows between hours worked categories](#)

[People working fewer hours, or no hours at all, for economic reasons](#)

[People working zero hours for economic reasons](#)

Hours worked and employment

The recovery in hours worked and employment has continued in October, with hours worked increasing by 1.2% and employment increasing 1.4%. This followed a small increase in hours (0.2%) and a decrease in employment (-0.3%) in September.

Hours worked increased by 5.6% in Victoria, following the decreases in August (-4.8%) and September (-2.1%). In contrast, hours worked decreased by 0.2% across the rest of Australia. This decrease was largely driven by hours worked in NSW, which decreased by 1.7%.

Since the low point in May, total hours worked increased by 117.6 million hours, recovering almost two-thirds (63%) of the 185.5 million hour decrease between March and May. However, hours worked in October were still 3.8% lower than March.

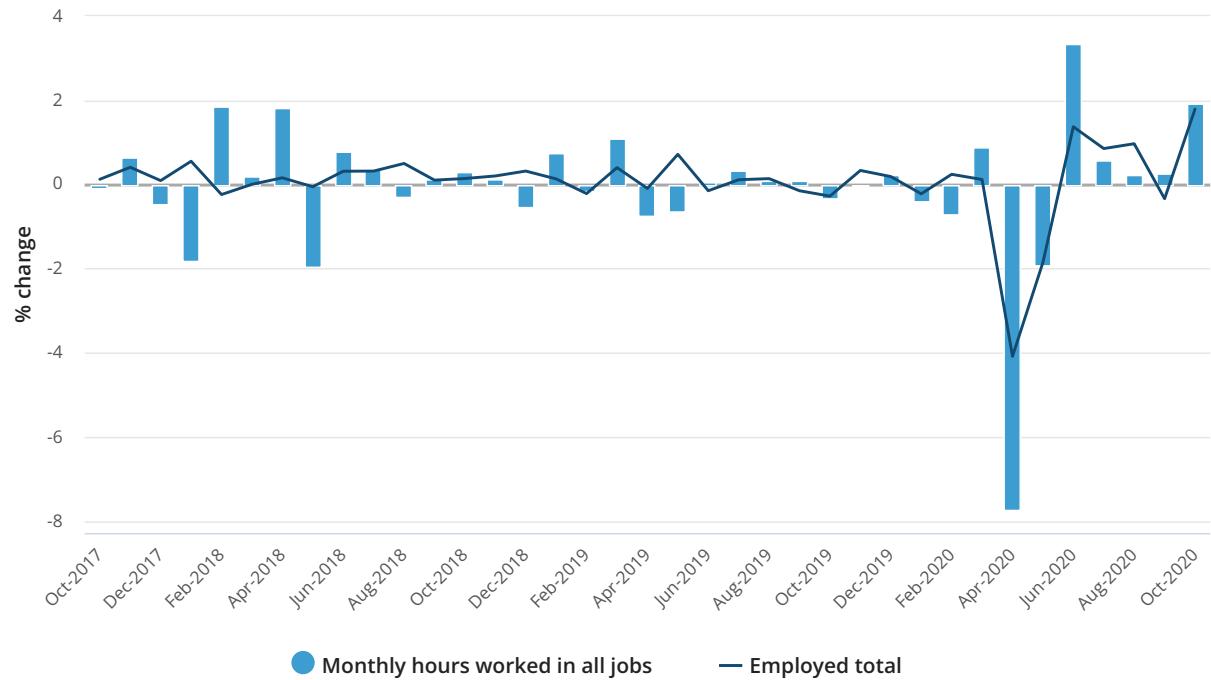
Charts 1, 2 and 3 show the monthly changes in seasonally adjusted hours worked and employment for all people, men and women. Hours worked for women showed stronger growth from May to August, following the much larger fall in female hours early in the COVID-19 period. However, in October, growth in male hours worked was stronger (1.9% compared to 0.2% for females).

Chart 1: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Chart 2: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Males,
Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Chart 3: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Females, Seasonally adjusted

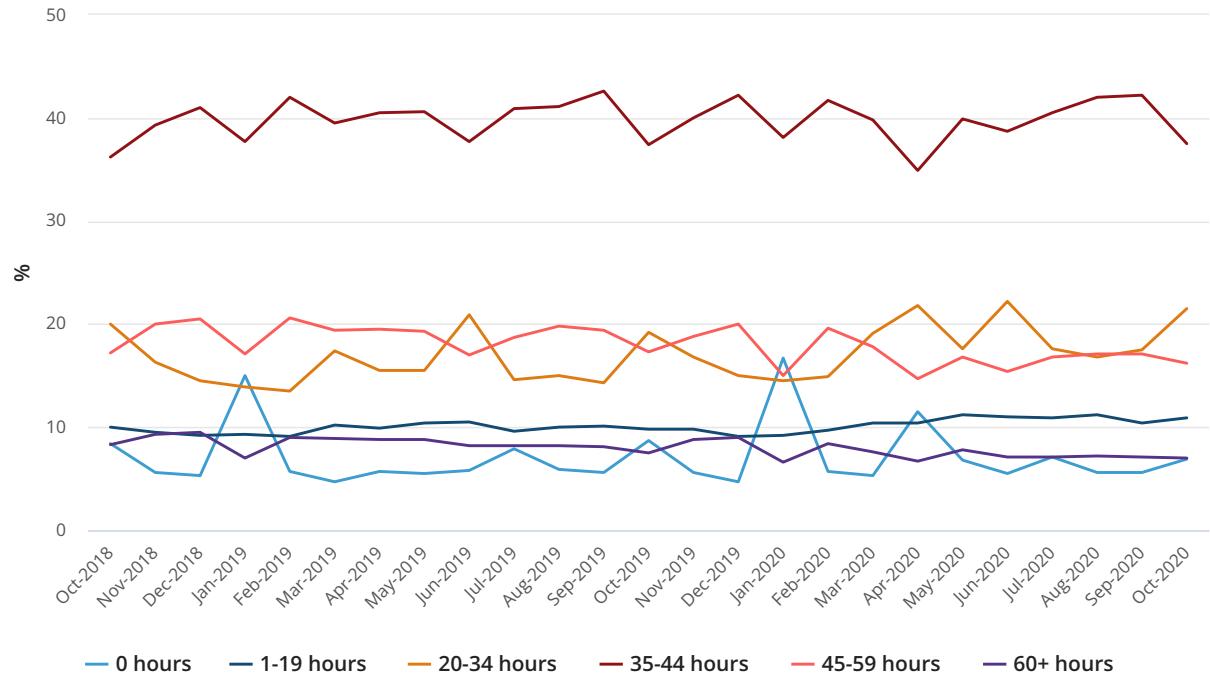


Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Hours worked ranges

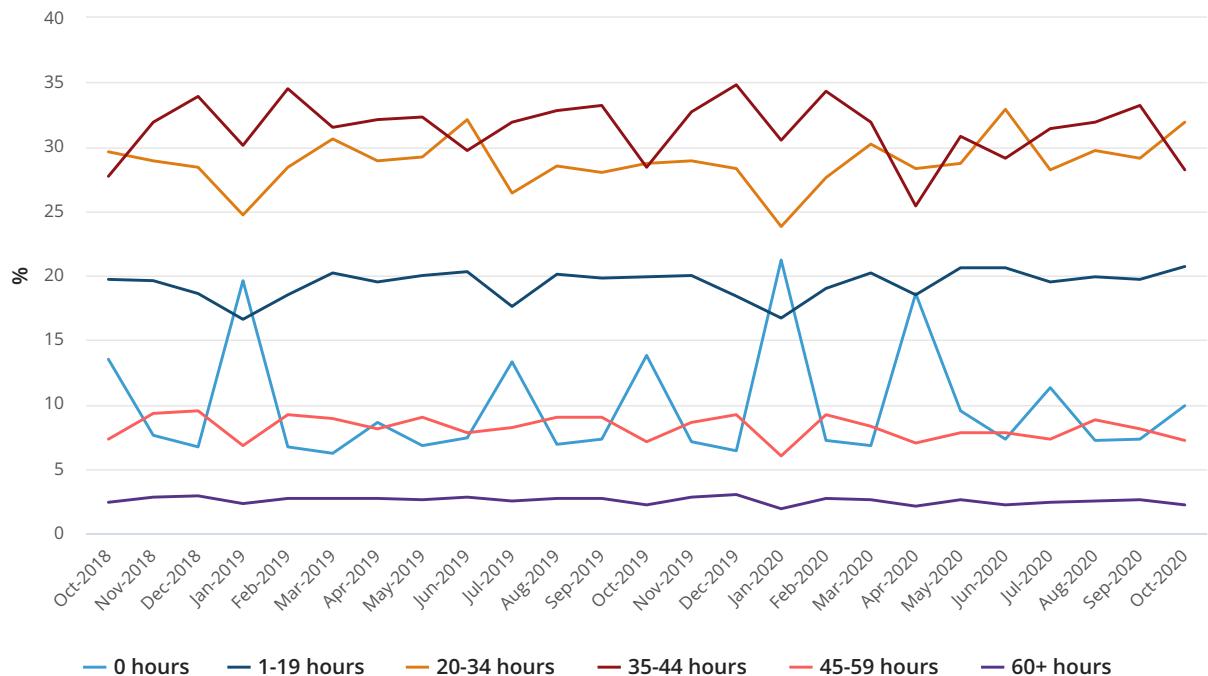
It is also illuminating to examine the number of people working within various hours ranges. Charts 4 and 5 show the distribution of employed men and women across the hours worked categories over the past three years.

Chart 4: Distribution of hours worked in all jobs, Males, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

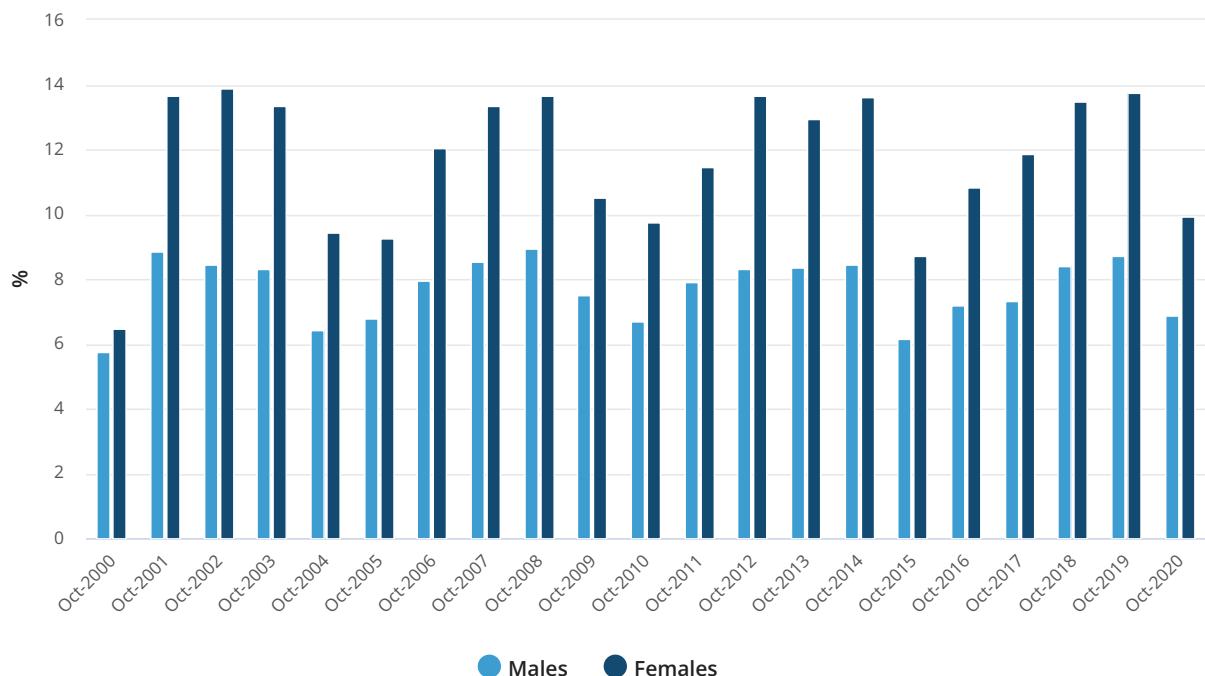
Chart 5: Distribution of hours worked in all jobs, Females, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Chart 6 shows that the proportion of employed men and women who worked zero hours in October 2020 was lower than October in the previous four years. These year-to-year comparisons were very different to the record highs for men and women that were seen in April and May 2020 (relative to April and May in previous years).

Chart 6: Proportion of employed working zero hours, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Flows between hours worked categories

Table 1 shows the proportion of people in each of the hours worked categories in October by their hours worked in September.

Of the employed people who worked zero hours in October, 21% (around 210,000 people) had also worked zero hours in September - indicating that they have been paid for at least some of the past 4 weeks (otherwise they would no longer be classified as employed). This was lower than the 33% recorded in the previous month, and considerably lower than the 45% recorded between April and May and 40% between May and June.

9% of the employed people who worked zero hours in October were not employed in September (again, indicating that they received some pay despite not working any hours).

There were also around 120,000 people who moved from working zero hours in September to being not employed in October (16% of the employed people who worked zero hours in September). This was a slight decrease on the previous month, and considerably lower than between May and June (150,000), and April and May (450,000).

Table 1: Flows between hours worked categories from August to September, Original

		October							
		0 hours	1-19 hours	20-34 hours	35-44 hours	45-59 hours	60+ hours	Not employed*	Total
	0 hours %	20.7	5.7	4.1	2.7	3.2	3	1.6	3.8
	1-19 hours %	14.5	56.9	10.9	2.8	2.4	1.1	1.6	9.5
	20-34 hours %	19.1	17.9	49.4	12.4	6	3.3	0.7	14.1
September	35-44 hours %	23.8	6.1	27.9	68.9	26.3	10.1	0.8	22.8
	45-59 hours %	8.7	2.8	3.8	9.6	50.8	24	0.2	7.3
	60+ hours %	4.2	0.6	0.6	1.4	9.3	57	0.1	2.7
	Not employed* %	9	10	3.3	2.2	2	1.6	95	39.7
	Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Longitudinal Labour Force microdata

*Not employed includes all people who were unemployed or not in the labour force.

People working fewer hours, or no hours at all, for economic reasons

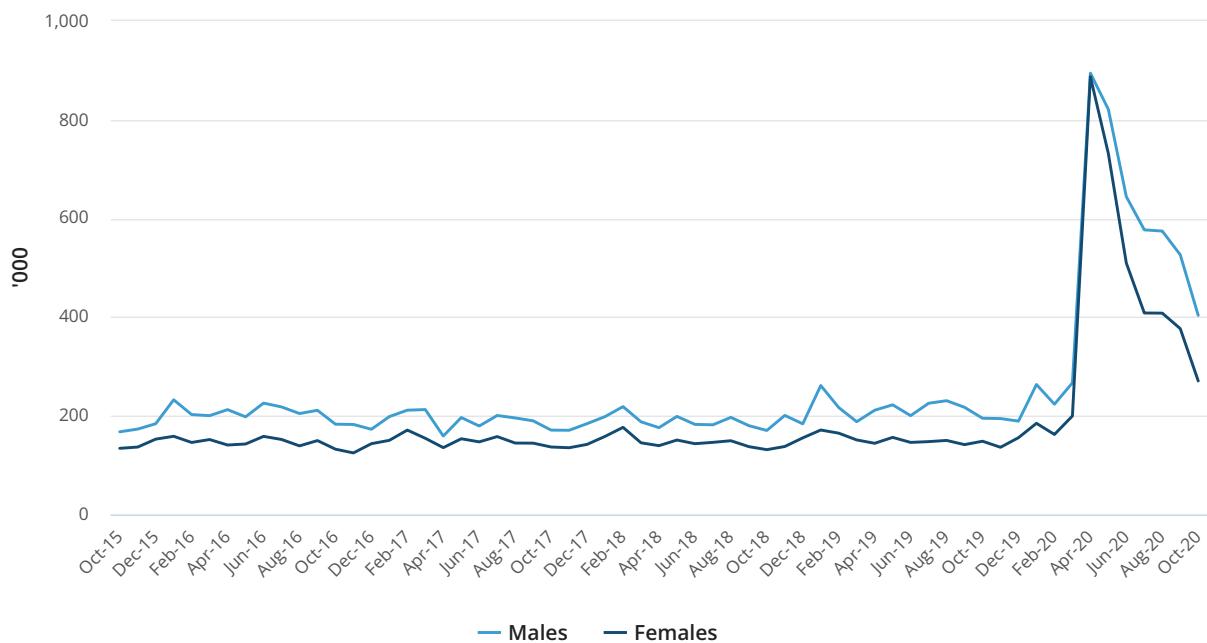
Chart 7 shows that the number of people working fewer (or no) hours for economic reasons has continued to decline in October, although for both men (403,500) and women (270,700) is still around twice the average level of the previous five years.

The number of men and women who worked fewer than their usual hours (or no hours at all) had a similar peak in April (at around 900,000 for both), however, the subsequent reductions have been much greater for women (a fall of over 600,000 since April, compared to around almost 500,000 for men).

Overall, there were around 675,000 people who worked fewer than their usual hours for economic reasons in October 2020, a decrease of over 200,000 since September, and over 1.1 million since April 2020 (when it was around 1.8 million people). This comprised:

- almost 300,000 'underemployed full-time workers' (i.e. full-time who worked less than 35 hours in the reference week);
- around 75,000 full-time workers who worked less than their usual hours in the reference week but still worked 35 hours or more; and
- around 300,000 part-time workers.

Chart 7: People working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all, for economic reasons



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2a

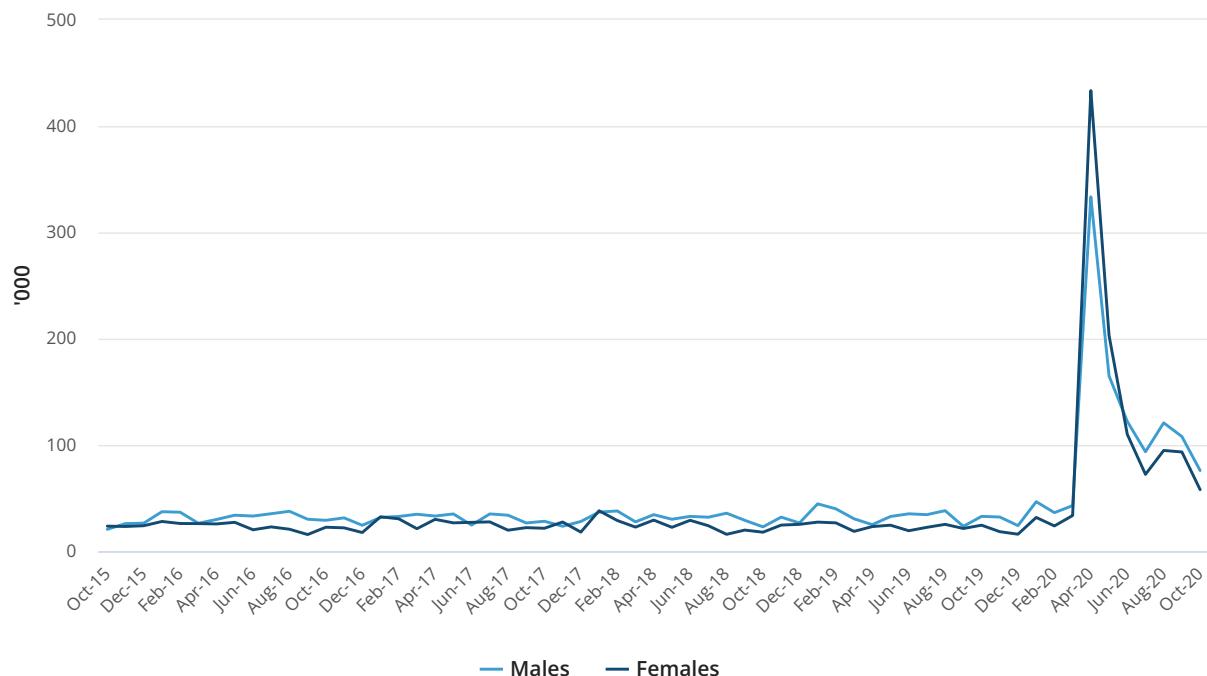
Of the 675,000 employed people who worked less than their usual hours for economic reasons in October:

- around 130,000 (or 20%) did not work at all; and
- around 540,000 worked some hours, but fewer hours than they usually work.

People working zero hours for economic reasons

The number of people working zero hours for economic reasons has also continued to decline (Chart 8). Following an almost 700,000 increase between March and April, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons decreased by 600,000 between April and July. There was a 50,000 increase between July and August, followed by a small decrease in September. Between September and October, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons fell by a further 70,000.

Chart 8: Employed people working zero hours for economic reasons, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2a

A further 50,000 employed people did not work at all as they began, left or lost a job. The majority of these people left or lost a job. This has declined from over 350,000 since April.

Table 2 shows the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons in each state or territory. All states and territories recorded very large increases in people working zero hours for economic reasons between March and April, followed by a steady decrease to July. Since July, in all states and territories except Victoria, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons has remained relatively steady or decreased slightly.

In Victoria, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons almost doubled between July and August. However, between September and October the number almost halved. Victoria accounted for half of the people working zero hours for economic reasons in October.

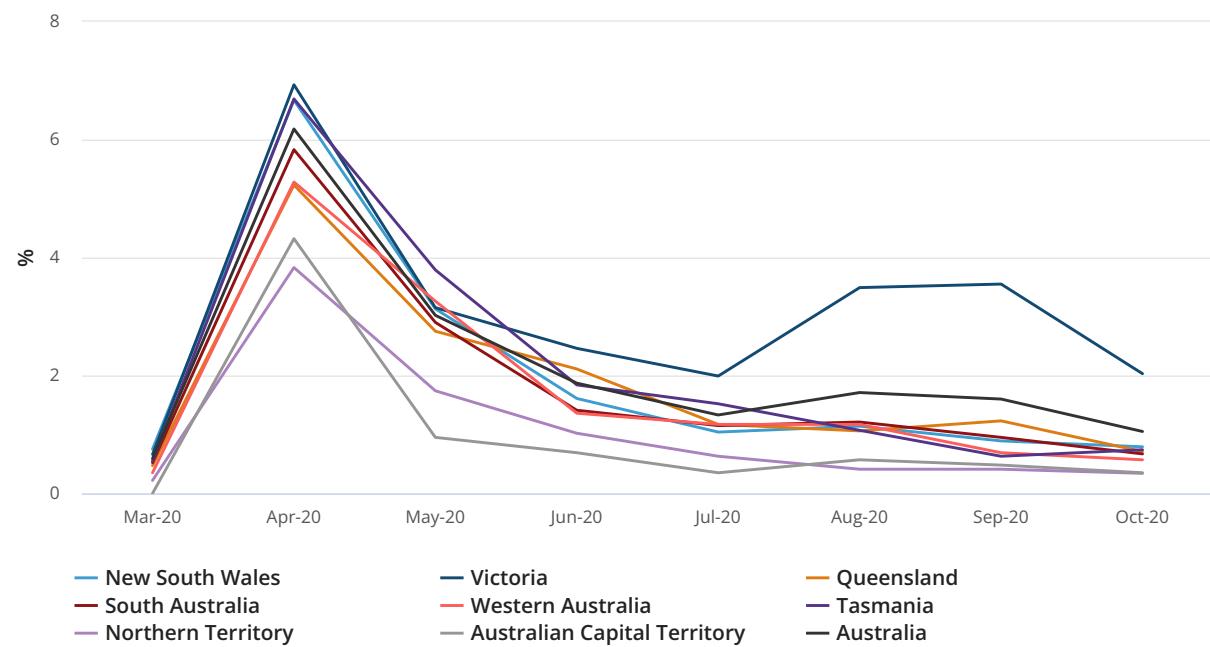
Table 2: People working zero hours for economic reasons, by State and territory, Original

	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20
	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)
New South Wales	30.8	261.2	121.2	63.7	41.6	45.8	35.8	32.2
Victoria	22.7	229.8	102.8	80.7	65.6	113	113.9	66.8
Queensland	12	126.9	64.9	51	28.4	26.5	31.2	18.2
South Australia	4.5	48	23.5	11.6	9.5	10.1	8	5.6
Western Australia	4.8	69.2	42	17.7	15.4	15.7	9.3	7.7
Tasmania	1.4	16.8	9.1	4.5	3.8	2.7	1.6	1.8
Northern Territory	0.3	5.1	2.3	1.3	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.4
Australian Capital Territory	0	10	2.2	1.6	0.8	1.4	1.1	0.9
Australia	76.5	766.9	367.9	232.2	165.9	215.6	201.3	133.8

Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2b

Chart 9 shows the proportion of employed people in each state and territory who worked zero hours for economic reasons.

Chart 9: Proportion of employed people working zero hours for economic reasons, by State and territory, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2b and Labour Force, Australia Table 12

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